

defense ministry, said that militant Hindu groups pose a greater danger than the actions of religious minorities. "Majority communalism poses a greater danger compared to minority communalism," he said. Members of the Hindu group Shiv Sena tried to heckle him while he addressed members of Parliament.

During a two-day BJP national executive meeting in the Uttar Pradesh town of Lucknow, Vajpayee chastised Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta over his state's handling of attacks on Christian missionaries in Mathura. Vajpayee reportedly said the state should have dispatched police to assess the situation and instill confidence among the Christian community. He also asked the state government to explain its position on the controversial religious places bill, which prohibits Muslims from building mosques or converting an existing building into a mosque without government permission.

Bajrang Dal national coordinator Surendra Kumar Jain said last month that his group was fighting to construct a temple for Ram in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. The extremist group also once demanded that the federal government declare Pakistan an enemy state.

Referring to the attacks against Christians, Jain said that "missionaries consider Hindus a soft target. Even the words 'soft target' were used in the missionary literature. However, now the Hindus have woken up. We are no more a soft target for their unholy activities. We appreciate missionary services, but only when the object is service and not conversion."

Monday's confrontation in parliament followed three attacks against Christians in Uttar Pradesh in the last two weeks. Members of the House of Worship, one of India's fastest-growing church groups headquartered in the southern state of Hyderabad, were attacked by suspected Bajrang Dal activists on the outskirts of Agra, site of the Taj Mahal, police said. The Good Friday attack on the 14-member preaching team from Hyderabad in the BJP-ruled state came a week after a Catholic priest and three nuns were attacked in a school. It was the seventh attack reported in the state in less than 100 days.

The Bajrang Dal complained to state police that the Hyderabad group was trying to convert villagers by offering them money, a charge church authorities deny. In a counter complaint the victims reported that a mob of 20 to 30 people attacked the van in which they were traveling and tried to burn the vehicle. The group returned to Hyderabad where the main church, Hebron Church, is located. The church, also known as the Indigenous Society of Churches in India, is one of the fastest growing in the country with mainly new converts as members. It was founded by a Punjabi Sikh agricultural engineer, Bakht Singh, in the 1920s. Bakht Singh is 99.

Three Catholic nuns on their way to attend midnight Mass in Rewari in neighboring Haryana state were attacked Saturday night by a man riding a scooter. It was the third attack on Christians reported in the past three months in this wheat-rich state. One nun, Sister Anandi, remains in Holy Family Hospital in serious condition. The other two nuns suffered minor injuries. Police so far have made no arrests.

John Dayal, convener of the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, said in a prepared statement that "this attack was part of the series of ongoing attacks on Christians and their institutions."

THE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS ACT OF 2000

HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000. It will help modernize our public schools by providing grants and loans for up to 8,300 renovation projects in high-need school districts. It will continue the highly successful class size reduction program by helping communities hire an additional 20,000 highly qualified teachers. It will boost investments in quality after-school and summer school programs advocated by the President. It will help us close the digital divide that currently leaves too many poor children and their teachers behind. It will bolster safe and drug free school programs, and strengthen programs to reduce hate crimes by children.

ESEA is our nation's flagship education partnership with local communities. It provides vital assistance to the most vulnerable, educationally challenged children in America. Until this Congress, the ESEA had enjoyed a rich and enduring history of bipartisanship.

Unfortunately, Senate and House Republicans have been highly partisan and divisive. At the beginning of the ESEA process, we urged Republicans to work in a bipartisan way. Instead, they proceeded in a highly partisan manner and created havoc throughout the reauthorization process. In the House, they carved up the ESEA into seven disjointed pieces—hoping to bolster their devastating public image and terrible performance on education.

Today, the ESEA process is in shambles. Straight A's, the Republican education block grant bill, has a veto threat pending and has no chance of becoming law. Their Teacher Empowerment bill has a veto threat pending because of its gratuitous attack and block granting of the Clinton Class Size Reduction Act. Conservative Republican Members are blocking floor action on two other ESEA bills, Even Start and Impact Aid. And the one major bipartisan bill, H.R. 2, has been sharply and publicly attacked by reactionary Republican Members of the Education and Workforce Committee.

Republicans repeatedly refused to work with Democrats to craft the pending ESEA bill, H.R. 4141, and voted in mass to defeat 52 of 54 amendments offered by Democratic Members. The bill passed out of committee is a legislative disaster. Every major education group opposes the bill. The President will probably veto it.

Because the Republicans have decided to play politics with America's school children, they have placed in jeopardy passage of this comprehensive Federal aid program to education. If the Republicans leave town this year without enacting the ESEA, it would be the first time that the program has permanently lapsed in its 35-year history.

I urge the Republican leadership to stop playing politics with our nation's school children, and pass ESEA legislation that can bring urgent relief and assistance to our public schools this year.

THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA: DEMONSTRATING A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO OUR NATION'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS ACT OF 2000

Helping Communities Repair and Modernize Unsafe Schoolhouses

Communities across the country are struggling to address critical needs to build new schools and renovate existing one. One-third of all public schools—about 25,000 schools—need extensive repair or replacement. A recent survey documented over \$250 billion dollars of unmet school modernization funding need.

The Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 authorizes \$1.3 billion annually to help communities make emergency school renovations such as repairing roofs, fixing dangerous electrical wiring and plumbing, bringing schools into compliance with fire safety codes, undertaking asbestos removal or abatement, and removing lead-based paint. The Act will support up to 8,300 renovation projects in high-poverty, high-need school districts that have little or no capacity to fund urgent repairs over the next five years.

Reducing Class Sizes/Smaller Schools

Research shows that class size reduction in the early grades is one of the most direct and effective ways to boost student academic achievement, especially among populations of disadvantaged children. Smaller class sizes ensure that every child receives personal attention, gets a solid foundation for further learning, and learns to read independently by the end of the third grade. The Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 continues the Clinton/Clay class size reduction program that is helping communities hire and pay for 100,000 new, fully qualified teachers.

The Act also reauthorizes the Small, Safe and Successful High Schools program, which helps high schools to create smaller, safer learning environments. Research has shown that the size of a school and the number of its students greatly impact children's ability to learn and the likelihood that violence may occur.

Accountability for Results

The bill requires schools reducing class sizes to hire only fully qualified teachers. The bill strengthens ESEA technology programs by focusing on the achievement of performance indicators and the correlation between technology and improved student achievement. The Act requires school safety and drug abuse prevention programs to be based on sound research, and strengthens reporting and eligibility criteria for the Title VI program, increasing program accountability.

Providing Safe After-School Learning Opportunities for Students

Extended learning programs reduce juvenile crime by providing a wide range of education, social, mentoring, and counseling services to help improve student behavior, including services relating to violence prevention and conflict resolution. Recent research has demonstrated that extended learning programs help improve student achievement in reading and math, and reduce truancy and dropout rates.

The Safe and Successful Schools Act more than doubles our investment to \$1 billion, in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. This program enables schools to stay open longer, providing safe and educational after-school opportunities for some 700,000 school age children in rural and urban communities each year, and vital social health, and educational services for their families.

Providing Safe and Drug Free Schools/Keeping Guns Out of Our Schools

America's students cannot be expected to learn to high standards if they are threatened by drugs and violence. There is a high level of concern by parents and students about school safety and violence caused in part by the tragic shootings at Columbine High School and other schools in the past two years.

The legislation will increase funding for the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act, and enhance its accountability and performance through the adoption of research-based programs. It also authorizes the Secretary of Education to set aside \$5 million annually to fund strong, community-based hate crime prevention activities.

The bill requires school districts, with a history of suspensions and expulsions for gun violence or possession, to work with law enforcement agencies to promote the use of child safety locks.

Lastly, the bill provides new, additional support for school-based alternative education programs to address the educational needs of students who are suspended or expelled from school. This authority will increase the safety of both our schools and communities by ensuring that discipline and violence problems leading to suspensions and expulsions do not spill over into the community.

Recruiting and Maintaining High Quality Teachers

The Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 requires all teachers to become certified or fully licensed, and have knowledge of the subjects they teach. The bill creates a "Parent Right to Know" requirement to ensure that parents are made aware of the professional qualifications and expertise of their children's teacher. It also includes a provision requiring that parents be notified when their child is being taught by an underqualified or substitute teacher for more than two consecutive weeks.

It also authorizes \$50 million to help high-poverty school districts attract and retain teachers and principals through better pay. To become eligible, schools would have to undertake rigorous peer review of every teacher, improve systems to remove low-performing teachers, and provide intensive support to give the opportunity for all teachers to succeed.

Expanding Access to Education Technology/Closing the Digital Divide

Technology in the schools can substantially improve student learning, classroom management, the professional development of teachers, and assessment of student progress. Most importantly, strong school technology programs report significant impact on gains in student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics. Technology has its greatest impact with low-income and rural students as well as with expanding opportunities for girls. Unfortunately, the "digital divide" still separates the technology haves and the technology have-nots—leaving our most disadvantaged children without vital knowledge and tools to compete with their more advantaged peers.

The Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 increases the Federal commitment to technology and closing the digital divide. The Act provides \$500 million for the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund program, to help the most disadvantaged school districts to provide educators with sustained, high quality training to integrate technology in their classrooms and provide students with the latest access to advantaged technology resources. The Act creates a \$50 million Go

Girls program to help encourage the ongoing interest in girls in science, mathematics and technology, and prepare girls to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees and careers in science, mathematics, or technology. The bill will provide new support for restructuring teacher education programs so that new teachers are proficient in the use of educational technologies and can integrate technology throughout their instructional practices. Lastly, it also creates new initiatives to develop and expand cutting edge technologies to improve teaching and learning, and to establish community technology centers in the neediest communities.

HONORING THE LOS ANGELES VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize a very important organization, the Los Angeles Veterans Resource Center. The Vet Center is currently celebrating its twentieth year of providing services to local veterans.

For twenty years the Los Angeles Veterans Resource Center has provided outstanding service to our nation's veterans and their families. The Vet Center Program was established in 1979 out of recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are community based and part of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. They provide a number of important programs and services to assist veterans, particularly those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

I thank the staff and volunteers of the Los Angeles Veterans Resource Center for the invaluable services they have provided to community veterans over the past 20 years. As a veteran of the Vietnam War, I thank them for their contributions. You have touched the lives of many. The veteran community of Los Angeles is grateful for your services. I wish you continued success.

TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, today I support H.R. 4163, the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights 2000." Last month when the House Ways and Means Committee considered this bill, I raised concerns about the apparent lack of oversight of State taxing authorities that use Federal tax return information.

This bill recognizes breaches of taxpayer confidentiality at the State level and contains a provision to require that States conduct on-site reviews of all contractors receiving Federal tax return information. However, this bill does not address instances in which state agencies may have inappropriately disclosed Federal tax information. In a recent study on taxpayer confidentiality, the Joint Committee on Taxation found that "[A]lmost all of the surveyed State taxing authorities reported some

discrepancy of one type or another [in their efforts to safeguard tax return information]."

I have personally heard stories from taxpayers about how my state's taxing authority, the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB), has misused and inappropriately disclosed Federal tax information. Some examples include making IRS tax returns public without the consent of the taxpayer and using the threat of disclosure as a tool to try to force taxpayers into concessions. I have even been told that the State's training materials encourage misuse of penalties and other types of inappropriate behavior.

In my current position on the House Ways and Means Committee, I plan to do my utmost to ensure that States like my State of California are fully accountable for the privacy of its citizens. I hope to work with other Members of Congress to improve H.R. 4163 by requiring more safeguards and oversight of State taxing authorities' use of Federal tax information.

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER JOHN W. SCOTT, JR.

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to recognize the outstanding service to our Nation of Chief Warrant Officer John W. Scott, Jr., the commanding officer of Coast Guard Station Sabine Pass, Texas, who will be relieved of command on May 5, 2000, as he retires after 31 years in the Coast Guard. Throughout his career, he exemplified the Coast Guard's core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. He is a highly respected leader who is renowned for his commitment to the Coast Guard men and women serving under his command.

Chief Warrant Officer Scott has lived the multi-mission character of the Coast Guard. Very early in his career, he had to face the stark reality that the Coast Guard is an armed force when he was assigned to serve on a patrol boat in Vietnam. His career is also ripe with examples of dedicated services to the mariner. He served many tours ensuring the safety of maritime commerce by maintaining aids to navigation in our critical waterways. Additionally, he operated and commanded boats, cutters and shore stations that rescued people in distress, responded to environmental threats and maritime disasters, and ensured the security of our ports. Moreover, he enforced federal laws that enhanced vessel safety, deterred unlawful activity that threatened our national security, and brought those that had violated our laws to justice.

Over the past four years while he has been in command of Coast Guard Station Sabine Pass, I have seen firsthand the remarkable results of his efforts. During this period, Chief Warrant Officer Scott directed over 700 search and rescue cases that resulted in saving the lives of 400 people. He directed numerous maritime law enforcement missions to deter and intercept illegal narcotics and other contraband destined for Southeast Texas shores. He initiated operations that preserved our valuable natural resources and fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. He achieved these results by instilling his vision of excellence in his crew,